



Solihull drinker

free

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOLIHULL BRANCH OF
CAMRA, THE CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE

Issue No: 22

Autumn, 2002



2002 Beer Festival

Yes, it's really going to happen... Solihull CAMRA is to hold its first beer festival since the 1998 Golden Lion Festival.

The venue is the British Legion, Union Road, Solihull, just up from Bar Co.

Taking place over the weekend 4th to 5th October the festival will be open from 5.30-11 on Friday and 12-4 and 6-11 on Saturday.

25 beers will be available with an emphasis on beers from the north not usually seen around Solihull. There will also be festival specials, together with a cider and a perry. A festival glass will be available, but they

are in limited supply. Hot and cold bar snacks will be available at all sessions and each evening there will be entertainment provided. On Friday we have Pete Smith and Herbie Hancox who will entertain you with a little of the blues and on Saturday night the ever popular New Georgia Jazz Band

Solihull CAMRA picture album...

Solihull CAMRA presented two pubs with their Pub of the Year Award for 2002. In the picture on the left a sober Solihull Branch Chairman Dave Hobbis presents Brad at the Bulls Head, Barston with his award.

The other successful pub is the Boat, Catherine De Barnes. Below right, Dave Hobbis, possibly the worst for wear in this picture presents Nigel and Elaine with their award at the pubs Queen's Jubilee celebrations held in June



From the Fringe

For the last 12 years I've lived, at various times, either side of the Birmingham/Solihull border, in either South Yardley (Coventry Road land) or Olton respectively. So I am open to ale-related facilities from both areas. I'd like to start with Part One of what may become a regular feature, highlighting what is on offer for fans of real ale just over the border in Brum-and I mean within a mile or two from the boundary.

Dave Hobbis's interesting article on bottled beer in supermarkets led me to consider supermarkets and off-licences around where I live. I'd like to tell you about one such place, i.e. Drink Buster on the Warwick Road. Drink Buster stands just(!) inside Acocks Green, divided from Solihull by Lincoln Road, with the fairly new Tesco Express seemingly right on the border. You may remember that in its previous life it was Motor World-I suppose the witty amongst you could make jokes about being well-oiled after a visit before and after it changed identity.

From the outside Drink Buster seems like any bog-standard offy-and when you step inside it seems so. But on closer inspection, to the right of the Grimflow and Foampour, plus the obligatory lagers, one has a number of well-stocked shelves groaning with good bottled ales.

Now there are some CAMRA members who swear that unless its out of a cask it's not the Real McCoy-well I thought they were actually a brand of crisp (or, for those with good memories, a comedy sketch show in the 90s featuring up-and-coming black comic talent from the likes of Curtis & Ishmael, to name but a few). Personally I enjoy bottled beer-of course as CAMRA members we are supposed to prefer bottle-conditioned beers...

What was on offer? Offerings from Daleside (I can heartily recommend the Morocco Ale, exploding with ginger), Black Sheep (I defy anyone not to like Riggwelter), Timothy Taylor (we all know of Landlord I hope!), Wychwood (with Hobgoblin and the like casting a spell), Jennings (I was Cockahoop when I found their beers!), a shelf full of Fuller's, they had Brain's (even if the company hasn't as their beers such as 'Skull Attack' seem to have lost a lot of their flavour-discuss), and Wells, Wells, we were bombarded with Bombardier, more space for Morland, and on a low shelf (sadly striking a low note?) Bass - a bit fishy perhaps? And also beers by Caledonian, Merriman's and old Shep(herd) Neame.

Oh, by the way, I forgot to note if any were bottled-conditioned but then I suggest you take your passport for a trip over the border sometime-enjoy!

Martin Collinge

Summer crossword winner...

Congratulations go to Mr and Mrs Jim Race from Knowle for completing the crossword. Their prize will be a carry keg of real ale of their choice from Bernies, Shirley. Here is the solution to the crossword.

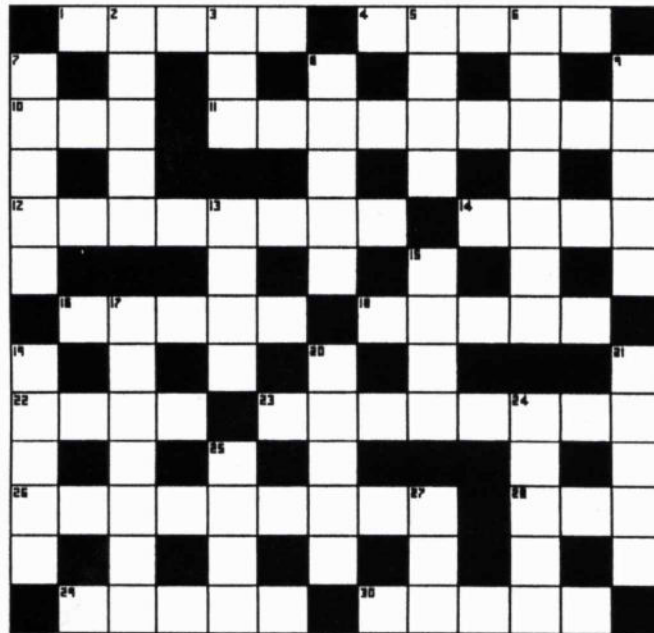
ACROSS:

Alcoholic; 6. Bar; 8. Lupulus; 9. Stoic; 10. Corn; 11. Ail; 13. Rush; 14. Treat; 16. Lockin; 18. Golfer; 19. Cider; 21. Alto; 22. Ear; 23. Ague; 27. Meals; 28. Humulus; 30. Nee; 31. Updraught

DOWN:

1. Awl; 2. Caper; 3. Hale; 4. Lassie; 5. Cask; 6. Beowulf; 7. Racehorse; 10. Cellarman; 11. Arnie; 12. Lager; 14. Tic; 15. Tor; 17. Cottage; 20. Dashed; 24. Gulag; 25. Esau; 26. Emma; 29. Sot

Below is the next crossword. Send your entry to: The Editor, Solihull Drinker, 79 Walsgrave, Drive Solihull, B92 9PP by 16/11/02. The first correct answer pulled out of the hat will receive the same prize from Bernies



CLUES

Across

- 1] Scottish River and Brewery (5)
- 4] Too much beer and crisps makes one this (5)
- 10] Beer to be drunk at 4 O'Clock? (3)
- 11] Brewery in over laced mix up (9)
- 12] Cowl has been Brewery (8)
- 14] Honey drink (4)
- 16] Leap into the cellar (5)
- 18] Bottle for the hip (5)
- 22] Norse God (4)
- 23] Anserine organ is a Brewery (5,3)
- 26] Desirable property of beer (9)
- 28] Neck --- I (3)
- 29] Credit, often refused (5)
- 30] Greet the bird (5)

Down

- 2] Speak publicly (5)
- 3] Sounds the same as 29 ac. (3)
- 5] No 14 ac. without them (4)
- 6] Brewery that gives 29 ac (7)
- 7] Wounds with knife (5)
- 8] Throng (5)
- 9] Intoxicating (5)
- 13] --- Time! (4)
- 15] Additional advantage (4)
- 17] Ladies maid called for a large beer (7)
- 19] Brewery in Jousting off season (5)
- 20] Royal enclosure? (5)
- 21] Bore Holes for beer in Beds (5)
- 24] Eat away (5)
- 25] Vessel in Catherine de Barnes (4)
- 27] Often goes with Partridge (3)



BERRIDGES

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SINCE 1983**

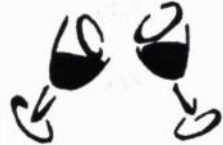


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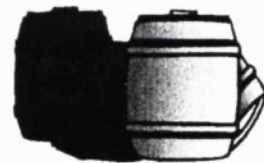
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"This Year I Went To Sunny Spain"...

For those "Drinker" readers who enjoyed my article about my trip last year to Germany on a weekend tour of 5 breweries (see "The Solihull Drinker" passim)

I thought I could comment on my time in a third European country- please remember Mr. Duncan-Smith that any article I write about this country is taking place in the heart of Europe!

From 24th March this year until April 7th I was in Spain for a two-week course called "Perfection* of The Spanish Language" for teachers of Spanish from Europe. There were all told 38 teachers (mainly female- the things one has to suffer for one's art!) from 8 different countries in Europe, with the largest group, 16, coming from different parts of the UK (if you like: I'm English personally).

The location of the course was the University of Granada in Southern Spain- near enough to Benidorm and other resorts but sufficiently inland to avoid the sweaty bodies. I spent two weeks in a classroom having lectures and classes- it wasn't a holiday- OK, we did have cultural trips out, but we only went to the beach once!

And going out and sampling the beer? Well, don't forget that wine and, in Spain particularly, sherry are probably more popular. But there are a number of beers.

If you look for Spanish beer in this country you'll probably be offered San Miguel (=St. Michael) and nowt else. If you're lucky you might see the odd bottle of Alhambra (from Granada itself, named after its most famous monument), Mahou, Aguila (=Eagle), Estrella (=star), and maybe others. Having tried out most of these I would suggest you try Cruzcampo, from Seville. Having said that it all seems to be Pilsener style, nothing wrong with that in principle, but (I would contend) that like anything mass-produced (Bass and beers from many large 'Regionals') the beer is not always very distinctive- drinkable but you wouldn't make a pilgrimage.

One word about drinking- they tend to have lots of bars, OK for Spanish atmosphere i.e. smoky rooms, TV blaring away and no-one watching it, families and friends engaged in animated conversation, people-watching on the outside terrace (where, I suppose, most terraces are...). I suggest you go to a bodega, which literally means cellar: these are bars where huge hams are hung up from the rafter above the bars, and you often get free rations or tapas of meat, cheese, olives or crisps with your beer (as you sometimes do in bars). They specialise in wine and sherry, but the atmosphere is great. And it's best to go drinking from 10 p.m. onwards- Spanish people eat later and go out later, so the place is still heaving at two or three in the morning.

Your beer is usually draught and is served in a 'tubo', a small thin glass, or a 'caña', which looks more like a large brandy glass. I had many happy hours doing my research....

*It is absolutely impossible to speak someone else's language perfectly, but of course my Spanish must have improved over the two weeks. However if you disagree with my opinion I'd be happy to discuss it with you over a pint or two of good old ale from these fair isles.

¡Salud!

Martin Collinge

Solihull CAMRA Independents Day Pub Crawl...

July is annually earmarked as Independents Month, when CAMRA highlights the many and varied Independent breweries present in the UK. If you look around the Solihull area, you would be forgiven for thinking that Marstons, Morlands & Wadworths were the only Independent breweries in existence. Solihull CAMRA hired a minibus for the occasion and set out to find some alternatives. We started at a Bankss pub, confident of not finding any sign of Tetley or Bass in there. Surprisingly given that the Wolverhampton & Dudley concern is now one of the country's largest regional breweries, there are only two of their pubs in our area. Given that we might want to talk to each other without going into the garden, we drove past the Coach House in Solihull and went out to the Punchbowl near Lapworth. There we had the choice of Bankss Bitter, Bankss Mild (sorry Original), Marstons Pedigree, and a Bankss special called World Cup Bitter. (Obviously the brewery had brewed enough of it to cater for England getting to the Final.) Next stop was the Bird in Hand near Henley-in-Arden, which is a freehouse but currently has a strong affiliation to Everards, the noted Leicestershire brewery. On offer was Everards Tiger & Everards Old Original. We then moved to the Bulls Head at Earlswood, owned by Thwaites. They currently put Bankss to shame, as this Lancashire brewery owns 3 pubs in the Solihull area. There we could sample Thwaites Bitter, Thwaites Thoroughbred and Thwaites Lancaster Bomber. (Anyone remember the old Mitchell's version?) Last stop was literally just down the road at the Bluebell, Warings Green. This too is a freehouse, where we had the choice of Enville White and Courage Ceremonial (brewed for the Jubilee). Alas we had stumbled across a National brewer right at the end. Still, the Enville was a cracking local (well Staffordshire) beer to finish on.

Steve Wood

in brief....

The Case is Altered - again!

This pub is at Five Ways near Hatton, just outside Solihull CAMRA's area. It has remained almost unaltered for centuries and is deservedly on CAMRA's National Inventory of Unspoiled Pubs and in the Good Beer Guide.

However, some building work has taken place recently and comes as a surprise on a first visit! The old outside toilets have gone and new ones are situated in an entrance corridor from the pub car park. The bar billiards table is also here, having been moved from the side room allowing more seating there. Fortunately the friendly traditional bar and cosy side lounge are all unaffected by the changes.

Church End Brewer opens a pub...

Church End Brewery moved to Atherstone some time ago after many years at the Griffin in Shustoke. The brewery has a pub on site described here by Ken Jackson. The pub is a bit like an American brew pub, with a glass partition that lets you see into the brewery. The bar has a row of optics and sells bottled Pilsners etc just like a proper pub. Food consist of parsnip crisps and scratchings. Opening hours are Fri eve and 11-11 Sat & Sun.

Saddlers Arms, Solihull update...

Interesting beers on at the Saddlers are Adnams Broadside and Youngs Bitter, both kept in excellent condition. The layout of the pub is the same, fresh but with old-fashioned carpets etc. The Youngs beer is served in Youngs glasses. There is an occasional DJ which according to our reporter quote "hearing just about back to normal - why have a DJ when half the pub is empty and everyone is cowering in the other half?". You have been warned!

25th Peterborough Beer Festival August 2002...

After the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, the largest of CAMRA's regional festivals is Peterborough. Visitor numbers are only just below the national and the choice of beers [around 300] is huge! My father Brian and I run Bernies Real Ale Off Licence and we thought we would visit Peterborough and call it a spot of company business! Bed and Breakfast was booked so that we could attend the Tuesday evening and Wednesday lunch sessions.

The festival is a large tented village in a pleasant green setting by the River Nene. Apart from all the beer, the "feel and atmosphere" of the place is excellent. There was a multitude of food stalls to choose from and plenty of live music. Shops sold a variety of publications and breweriana and there was an enormous variety of foreign beer, traditional cider and strong fruit flavoured country wines.

The beer quality was very good considering it was in a tent and I was delighted to see so many new breweries [to me]! Scilly Ales, Atlas, Blanchfield, Felstar, Glastonbury, Hobden's, Oxford, Scarecrow, Suthwyk and Winster were just a few of the beers you certainly don't see in your local Solihull pub! We enjoyed about 30 beers in all including some from Oakham, the local brewery.

Oakham's brewery tap is nearby and is well worth a visit, as is Charters - a brilliant pub. This is a converted Dutch grain barge, floating on the river almost next to the festival site!

Peterborough is an easy journey from Solihull. Down the M6 and A14, it took about an hour and a half from Shirley to the centre of town. Trains on the Stanstead Airport line so why not treat yourself to a visit next year. We certainly were not disappointed!

Dave Queenborough



It's that time of year again when we all await with expectation the new edition of the CAMRA Good Beer Guide.

The 30th edition should be on the bookshelves in October at a cost of £12.99. CAMRA members can get it from CAMRA HQ or from your local branch for £9.00.

One third of the pubs in the 2002 GBG did not make this year's guide, so it's well worth buying. The Breweries section has been extended, with tasting notes for most beers. Articles appear by ex Monty Python Terry Jones, Jeff Evans a previous GBG editor and regular What's Brewing contributor, Michael Jackson renowned writer on beer related matters and to make us all feel good Tim Hampson writes on scientific evidence that shows that beer drinking is good for you. With over 800 pages it's a bargain, cheers!

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Solihull Pubs Price Survey 2002...

Drinkers in the North West have reason for celebration after CAMRA's 2002 price survey showed they get more beer for their money than the rest of Britain. Lager costs an average of £1.90 per pint in the region's pubs - compared with £2.11 nationally - while real ale is £1.69 against a nationwide average of £1.92. Londoners pay above the odds forking out £2.31 for a lager or £2.12 for a real ale - but even they have cause for cheer. Mike Benner of CAMRA said: "On average we pay considerably less than most beer-drinking nations which is good news." UK average price of a pint of lager is £2.11 and in the regions: London: £2.31; East Anglia: £2.24; South West: £2.15; West Midlands: £2.04; North: £2.04; Yorkshire: £1.98 and the North West: £1.90. He said the North West had been the cheapest place for a pint for the last few years. The survey also showed the price of beer had not risen with inflation. The survey looked at 7,000 prices for a pint of beer in more than 1,200 pubs across the country.

That's a potted version of the press release from CAMRA HQ so how do we compare in Solihull? We surveyed 11 pubs for the 2002 survey being a mixture of free houses, brewery owned or pub co. owned. We found that the average price of a pint of real ale was £1.95 which compares well with the national average. Lager averages out at £2.25 per pint in our local pubs, so lager drinkers in the Solihull area are being ripped off compared to the average price here in the West Midlands of £2.04.

The survey covered a variety of drinks in local pubs and interestingly, but consistent from year to year is the fact that Guinness is the most expensive beer in our pubs coming in at a hefty £2.34 a pint on average. What about the Nitrokeg beers around Solihull. Well they weigh in on average at £1.94, so it's better to drink the real thing which is only £0.01 dearer.

I here you ask, "So where's the best place to drink real ale in Solihull?" It would be unfair to name pubs as we only surveyed 11 out of some 80 in our area. Surprisingly our free houses came out well, whilst some of the pub co's and brewery owned pubs varied in price with standard beers being of comparable value to free houses but any guest beers coming out as rather expensive.

At the end of the day though it's the quality and range of beers that matter and for most Solihull real ale drinkers we know where to go for that.

Steve Dyson

Nick and Gwen welcome you to the Vaults, Knowle...

The Real Ale venue in Knowle with:

- ◆ Six handpumped beers including regulars, Ansell's Mild, Greene King IPA, Burton Ale, Tetley Bitter and two guest beers
- ◆ Real cider from Weston's
- ◆ Food available lunchtimes Monday - Saturday
- ◆ Occasional Beer Festivals

THE VAULTS

Solihull CAMRA Pub of the Year 1993 and 1994

CAMRA Good Beer Guide listed since 1993



*The Vaults, St Johns Close, Knowle.
Tel: 01564 773656*

Spotlight Inn...

Winged Spur, Ullenhall

Without a pub to act as a focal point, I strongly believe village life would die, and with the loss over the last few years of its school, general stores and Post Office, Ullenhall is no different.

It is for this reason that 'The Winged Spur'; a distinctive white washed building in the centre of the village, plays such an important role.

I recently visited the pub and after a warm welcome from the licensee of the past 10 years, Paul White, was given an insight into the history of the 200-year-old Winged Spur.



It was originally called the Cathlough Arms after the Earl of Cathlough, the local squire, who resided at Barrells Hall and once owned both the pub and most of the village. In the 1870's the pub changed its name to 'The Spur Inn' before later becoming 'The Winged Spur', this being the Earls coat of arms. The Cathlough estate privately owned the pub until 1924, at which point it was sold to a local Leamington brewery before being bought by Flowers in the late 1940s.

Previously consisting of 3 rooms the pub is now open plan, nevertheless its

distinctive open brickwork pillars give the inside plenty of character and log and coal fires burning during the winter months provide a warm and reassuring welcome. Additionally outside there is a small patio area and a garden at the far end of the car park.

Turning to the beer, the pub is now owned by Enterprise Inns who Paul happily comments allow him a degree of choice when it comes to the real ale he can offer. At the time of my visit he offered Flowers IPA as a set beer and Kelham Island Kelham Gold as his guest. Other beers recently stocked are Everards 'Lazy Daze' Youngs 'Triple A' and also beers from Weatheroak, our local Alvechurch brewery and Morrells, all of which he obtains through the wholesaler Beer Seller.

Food is available lunchtime and evening every day except Sunday, when in the evening the pub is taken over by the popular weekly quiz.

Unlike some pubs in the Solihull Area that will remain nameless 'The Winged Spur' is entirely without pretensions and at the same time makes a valuable contribution to Ullenhall village life.

Dave Hobbis



THE BULLS HEAD

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Cock Horse, Rowington Beer Festival...

It's very rare for a pub in Solihull CAMRA's area to stage a beer festival, so the one at the Cock Horse in Rowington near Lapworth was always going to be worth a visit! This pleasant country pub is on the Old Warwick Road, just past Lapworth. Staged over the Bank Holiday Saturday, Sunday and Monday, we went on the Sunday evening.

The weather was mild and dry and the first thing that greeted us was the front terrace full of tables and chairs heaving with people! We soon found the beers, about 16 casks, all lined up in a small marquee. The range was fairly conservative with well known brands such as Ruddles, Highgate, Spitfire, Banks's and Abbot but there was also Highgate Beezone, Smiles Summer Vat, Hydes Summer Challenge and Nethergate Golden Gate to add some interest. We tried about a dozen beers [sharing a half] and had a very pleasant evening!

In the car park behind the pub a stage had been set up so we wondered over to listen to one of the several bands that had been booked for the weekend. An excellent firework display finished off the evening giving a "carnival" style atmosphere around the pub.

At about £1.30 per half pint the beer was rather expensive but tents, pop groups and fireworks all cost money and I didn't feel at all that I had been fleeced!

There will always be someone who wants "something for nothing but you have to remember that pubs have to make money! If not it wouldn't be worth them going to the trouble of staging a festival and thus to the detriment of real ale...

Dave Queenborough, Bernies

Local News and Beers around 'ere...

Seen at the Winged Spur, Ullenhall, Youngs Triple A and Weatheroak Ale and at the Colebrook, Haslucks Green M&B Mild, Brew XI and Adnams Bitter whilst along at the Drawbridge, Majors Green Tetley Bitter and Marstons Pedigree. A recent visit to the Cheswick Green Inn shows it to be still keg and at the Drum & Monkey, Bentley

Heath Tetley Bitter, Marstons Pedigree and Boddingtons Bitter were on offer. The Wilsons Arms, Knowle has been going downhill real ale wise for some time so just when you thought things couldn't get worse Brew XI is still on, but the Bass has been replaced by Tetley Bitter. The Red Lion, Knowle has Wadworths 6X and Brew XI and along at the Punchbowl, Banks Bitter, Bankss Original, Marstons Pedigree and Bankss World Cup 2002 Not too far away at the Bird In Hand, Beaudesert, Everards Tiger and Everards Old Original are on offer. Thwaites offerings at the Bulls Head, Earlswood were Thwaites Bitter, Thwaites Thoroughbred and Thwaites Lancaster Bomber. The Plough, Stratford Road, more of an eatery had Boddingtons Bitter and on handpump Flowers IPA which on a previous visit was nitro keg. A result of consumer pressure? Reservoir, Earlswood still serving Tetley Bitter and Greenalls Bitter and along at the Old Royal Oak Tetley Bitter and Greene King Abbot Ale. The pub is now open all day. The Saxon, the other pub in Chewsick Green has had a makeover recently and is now owned by Enterprise Inns (first in our area?). Greenalls Mild replaced by Bankss Original Smoothpour. Tetley Bitter the only surviving handpump. Also open all day now. At Solihull Lodge the Prince of Wales has had a major refurbishment, but still keg. The Orange Tree at Chadwick End had Batemans XB, Tetley, Greene King Abbot whilst the Herons Nest outside Knowle has Bass and Brew XI. Harviestoun Schiehallion sampled at the Boat, Catherine De Barnes, whilst the Vaults, Knowle has stocked Kelham Island Golden Eagle and Hook Norton Mild.



Solihull times

Socials

Friday and Saturday 4th-5th October. Solihull Beer Festival See front for details
Saturday 23rd November Hockley, Birmingham pub crawl. Phone Keven for details

Beer & Baltis

Friday 11th October	Lamp Tavern, Barford Street, Digbeth, Birmingham	8-8.30pm
Friday 25th October	Tipsy Gent, Bordesley Green, Birmingham	8-8.30pm
Friday 29th November	Old Crown, Sandwell Road, West Bromwich	8-8.30pm
Friday 27th December	Harvester, Tanhouse Farm Road, Olton	8-8.30pm

Branch Meetings

Monday 7th October	Lyndon, Olton	8.30pm
Monday 4th November	AGM and Branch Meeting at the Bulls Head, Barston. <i>Note that this meeting starts promptly at 8pm to enable a short branch meeting followed by the AGM</i>	
Monday 2nd December	Greswolde Arms, Knowle	8.30pm

Keven Parker is the Branch Social Secretary and you can contact him for information about events during the evenings on 0121 242 5548

Brenda Duffy is the Branch Secretary on 01564 200 431

Any complaints about short measure? Contact Solihull Trading Standards on 0121 704 6844.

The Solihull Drinker is the newsletter of the Solihull & District Branch of CAMRA, the Campaign of Real Ale. The views expressed are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily the views of the Solihull Branch, or the Campaign for Real Ale Ltd., or at least of the Editor.

All contributions, comments and enquiries should be sent to:

The Editor, Solihull Drinker, c/o 79, Walsgrave Drive, Solihull B92 9PP
or e-mail steve_dy@yahoo.com

For advertising contact the Editor on 0121 603 8994 who can offer very competitive rates!

The Editor reserves the right to amend or shorten any contributions in the Solihull Drinker, but will always honour the spirit of the contribution.

Solihull CAMRA 2002 ©

The 23rd edition of *Solihull Drinker* will be published on December 2nd, 2002
The deadline for advertising or contributions will therefore be
November 23rd, 2002